



U.S. Immigration
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News Release

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NEWTON GRANITE COMPANY OFFICERS, CPA COHORT INDICTED, ARRESTED FOR FRAUD SCHEME

Southeast's largest granite supplier intimidated, threatened South Africans brought here

ATLANTA—The president of one of the Southeast's largest suppliers of granite and marble, two company officers and a conspiring CPA were arrested here today on a 59 count federal indictment related to a scheme to fraudulently qualify hundreds of workers for visas that enabled them to enter and work the United States, announced United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Special Agent-in-Charge Kenneth A. Smith.

Arrested today was Newton Granite & Marble President Johannes Du Preez, and corporate officers Franciska Du Preez and Jeff Estep.

Newton Granite & Marble, Inc., of 164 Weldon Road, Palmetto, Ga., has about 150 employees here and is a key supplier of stone for two national building supply chains and an Atlanta-based custom home builder.

Also arrested was Stanley Fur, a CPA licensed in Georgia and the owner of Empire International, Inc. Under Empire, Fur specialized in providing immigration application services to South Africans and other communities.

Franciska Du Preez is the wife of Johannes Du Preez. The two Du Preezs are citizens of South Africa. Fur is a naturalized U.S. citizen and native of South Africa. Estep is a U.S. citizen.

The indictment alleges the South African rock quarry company Dimention Rock, Ltd., is a "dummy" or "shell" company formed in 1990 that never conducted business. Mr. Du Preez, who co-founded Newton Granite in the United States in 1996, purchased Dimention Rock in 1996.

The officers of Newton Granite then schemed with Fur to arrange the transfer of aliens into the United States under the "L-1a" visa program. Under this program, foreign companies may transfer

foreign citizen executives and managers of the parent company to its U.S.-based subsidiary. In order to do this, the company's foreign citizen-employee must have worked for the parent company, a branch, affiliate, or subsidiary in a full-time capacity at least one full year during the three years prior. Under this same program, certain relatives may accompany the worker under an "L-2" visa, but cannot work in the United States.

Fur allegedly provided elaborate fraudulent L-1 immigration packages that included fake supporting documentation such as resumes, company letterhead, sponsorship letters, business plans, financial statements, and company organizational charts. These packages were used to demonstrate eligibility for the two visa programs.

Mr. Du Preez first entered the United States as a visitor and became a partner with another granite company in 1995. After leaving that company, he allegedly purchased the shell company and used it to immigrate to the United States along with his wife. The Du Preezs and Fur then arranged for other South Africans and their families to enter similarly.

Newton Granite's officers also arranged to house the South African aliens here. In further violation of U.S. immigration law, the indictment alleges spouses brought into the country under the scheme were encouraged or induced to work for Newton Granite in exchange for cash or for credit against rent, furniture, utilities, and the visa application arranged by Fur. This concealed the fact that they were working here. About 60 South Africans were employed at the company.

"This indictment shows the lengths to which some criminals will go to exploit the United States' immigration system," said Yates. "It also shows that Atlanta-area law enforcement is unified in combating crime and is fully capable in unraveling the intricate schemes criminals devise. We commend the agents for the work they have accomplished in this matter."

"Prosecuting people who violate the immigration laws protects legitimate U.S. workers including those people who come to the U.S. legally," said Smith. "It appears more than hundreds of fraudulent immigration packages were submitted and some the workforce they brought here was abused, threatened and intimidated. When we shut down schemes like this, there can be no doubt that we're committed to restoring integrity to the immigration system."

"They recruited workers with the promise of jobs and exploited them," said Douglas Colon of the Department of Labor. "It's shameful and disturbing."

In addition to the arrests, federal agents, early this morning, executed search warrants at Newton Granite as well as the business office of Empire International. ICE special agents also arrested 49 undocumented aliens employed at Newton Granite. These people, many of whom are citizens of Mexico, are being processed by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents.

The investigation, which continues, was jointly conducted between ICE, the FBI, IRS Criminal Investigation, and the Department of Labor. The case will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Barbara Nelan.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), responsible for the enforcement of border, economic, infrastructure, and transportation security laws. ICE seeks to prevent acts of terrorism by targeting the people, money and materials that support terror and criminal networks.